THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) No Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) Yes Sir.

Damage to Shrines in Najaf and Karbala

967. SHRI SHAHID SIDDIQUI: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware of reports regarding holi shrines of Muslims being damaged in Najaf and Karbala which has agitated Indians generally and Shia Muslims particularly; and

(b) whether Government have enquired about the protection of these shrines as they are of great concern to Indian Muslims?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) Yes.

(b) Yes. Government have emphasized the imperative need to respect the religious sentiments and cultural sensitivities by all the concerned in Iraq.

Death of Indians in Iraqi blasts

968. SHRI RAJKUMAR DHOOT: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that many foreigners have been killed in various blasts in Iraq;

(b) whether any Indian has also fallen victim in such incidents;

(c) if so, the details thereof and the compensation paid to next of kin of the deceased; and

(d) the steps taken by Government to ensure safety of Indians living in Iraq?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) Government have seen reports of death of foreigners in various blasts in Iraq.

(b) Yes.